DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 185 907 HE 012 567

AUTHOR Gray, H. L.
TITLE Assessment in Further Professional Training.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; Individual Development; Interpersonal Competence; *Professional Development; *Professional Education; Professional Training; *Student Development; *Student Educational Objectives; *Student Evaluation; *Student Participation; Student Role

ABSTRACT

The process of assessment of learners in professional training is discussed. In professional training, students are involved in assessment, since the examining process is overtly linked to the learning practice. Distinctions concerning examinations, assessment, and evaluation are offered. Professional training is concerned with competence in nontechnological or nontechnical skills, the skills of personal and interpersonal relationships. Further professional training has as its major objective the evaluation of performance by helping the learner to internalize a certain behavioral value system. Professional skills are ones that derive from the social functioning of the self, the expression of personality in social settings. Professional training and development is essentially an individual matter: the improvement of present skills. It is contended that in further professional training, learners will be helped to internalize their learning if they can help determine and select modes and criteria of assessment, examinations, and evaluation (where relevant). In programs of professional training, criteria in examination, assessment, and evaluation accumulate during the program and in reference to the user's environment. It is essential to have the agreement of the learner about the mode of assessment. Lists of leadership skills, knowledge and skill base for leadership, assessment criteria, and modes of presentation of material or assessment are included. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED185907

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY H. L. Gray

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

ASSESSMENT IN FURTHER PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

by H.L. Gray

By and large assessment in academic programmes is conceived as a terminal activity. After a period of study, students are assessed in a single event (generally a written examination) by tutors and their selected moderators. It is unusual for students to take part in determining the mode and format of the assessment tool, to take part in the evaluation process other than as subjects, to nominate examiners or to determine the content or content areas. The conventional pattern of assessment and evaluation is for decisions to be made about others with no more than an initial 'handover' contact.

Internally determined assessment may be more closely related to the taught content though it by no means follows that examiners will not try to surprise and catch out students. However, with internal examinations, students usually learn the cultural content and value system in which examinations are set and they will pick up their tutors preferences and interests. Nevertheless, conventional assessment becomes a game of guessing not just the answer but what kind of questions may be asked. Potentially, the examiners can change the rules unilaterally and students have no control over what is assessed or the manner of assessment.

In professional training, the involvement in assessment on the part of the student is greater. The apprentice is aware of his progress because the examining process is more overtly linked to his learning practice. Technical training is not interested in surprise and trick questions for which the student may not have prepared. Technicians are only tested on what they have consciously attempted to learn. Practical situations are aids to recall but technical training is much less concerned with recall than performance.

There is a great deal of confusion about assessment due in part to the fact that different groups speak from different experience bases yet use the same terminology. There is a world of difference between assessing a work

HE 012 562

of art, a design for a new town hall, the computation skills of a young secretary, and the critical skills of an undergraduate in an Oxbridge College. Yet in all cases the terms examination, assessment (and sometimes evaluation) are used.

There is an often unrognised division between practical (technical and technological skills) like plumbing, gardening and the interpersonal skills like nursing and retailing. The fact is that distinctions are difficult to make because the commentator constantly shifts his ground among technical performance, customer response, subjective evaluation, interpersonal considerations. For example, what constitutes customer satisfaction in terms of a contracted job done by a plumber? Who decides and how is it decided whether a job is done satisfactorily? There is also the problem that an engineer who is familiar with assessing engineering tasks tries to apply the same criteria to his long essay (though it is an informed guess that the engineer changes his ground when criticising an historian's evaluation. Engineers are much more subjective than they realise).

The personal value systems of students varies from subject area to subject area so that even before recruitment the disposition of students towards certain forms of assessment has been determined. That is part of the reason why engineers do not do sociology and psychologists do not choose geology. This is even more true in the case of Further Professional Training where the disposition of the student is well orientated within his culture of the subject area. Hence certain modes of assessment will tend to be more acceptable than others and these modes will be those that themselves relate to the ideology (value system) of the discipline area. Clearly the working out of mathematical problems will be more congenial to students of statistics and accounts while students of drama will prefer performance situations rather than written exercises such as essays.

Conventionally, examinations take place according to the calendar rather than the process of learning. Assessment is a different activity from examination in that examinations are competitive and qualifying activities purely and simply; their purpose is to select. It is generally understood that a proportion of entrants to an examination will fail and it may be more correct to refer to examinations as (forms of) competitions.

There has grown up considerable confusion over examinations and assessment and also evaluation. To clarify the situation we may say that assessment is concerned with the learning process itself and is a means of checking out what has been learned. Evaluation is making judgements about what has been learned and ascribing qualitative 'values' to it. Not all learning needs to be examined, no learning at all needs to be evaluated but learning cannot occur without assessment. Assessment may be described as an awareness of the learning process itself.

Examinations are set, organised and effected by people other than those being examined. The examiner is a totally passive (but responsive) element in the examination process; he merely provides the material to be examined. The learner who is evaluated is likewise outside the process of evaluation for though he may be perfectly content with what (he believes) he has learned, the evaluator may not be so satisfied. There is no need at all for an evaluator to include the 'evaluee' in the process at all unless he so desires. There may be a growing tendency for evaluators to discuss with evaluees the subjective elements in evaluation but there is no inherent requirement.

Assessment is a different matter. It is an integral part of the learning process for although it requires an equal awareness of what is not learned as well as what is learned this awareness is part of the learning or "knowing".

Professional training is not the same as training for the professions. Professional training is concerned with competence in non-technological or non-technical skills, the skills of personal and interpersonal relationships.

Sometimes technical skills and interpersonal skills are closely associated, even inextricably entwined (the skills of a lawyer or estate agent for example) but professional skills are ones that derive from the social functioning of the self, the expression of personality in social settings.

A course of professional training may also be used for selection purposes and evaluative criteria be imposed on it, but professional training and development is essentially an individual matter. Examinations are concerned with finishing lines without regard to starting lines but professional training is primarily concerned with starting lines. That is not because finishing lines are unimportant but because the material of professional training is always centred on the development stage of the person with the possible level of attainment of secondary importance. Examinations reverse the bias. For instance, the level of attainment for 'A' level French is more or less determined by the terminal levels of attainment. On the other hand, a course in salesmanship is concerned how far a trainee salesman can improve on what he is, on his present skills.

In academic courses, there are a number of contentious points about the validity of selective determinants. Are there any inherent reasons why only a certain number should pass an examination? May not proper selection criteria be more important than discriminating achievement? Is there not a contract between learner and teacher that places a responsibility on the teacher to help the learner, other things being equal. How does cognitive examination and evaluation relate to affective learning if at all? (Can it be assumed that a skilled statistician will choose always to use his statistical skills in a morally desirable way?) Can learning be examined and evaluated satisfactorily at any given point in time? May not some people have a longer period of learning gestation than others; may not the accelerated accumulation of learning occur differently for each person? And there are other questions.

Since presumably we do not wish to play tricks on adults in their education and training, we may indicate certain pre-conditions for learning. One of these is that learning should be a collaborative process, student and teacher working as partners. A second is that students should be allowed to be responsible for their learning and hence be pro-active in the process. A third is that the student may be the best judge of his learning if only because he is more aware of his purposes than his teachers. A fourth is that criteria of evaluation can ultimately only be the student's and cannot be the teacher's except in the helping capacity. A fifth is that the continuing responsibility for moral responsibility lies with the student and not the teacher.

Examinations may be used as part of an assessment provided their subjectivity is acknowledged. In some situations, a cognitive content (both quantitative and qualitative) may be desirable but where a learner is already involved in practice, as is the case of further professional training, there is little chance for retrospective selection. Further professional training has as its major objective the evaluating of performance by helping the learner to internalise a certain behavioural value system. For example, the way in which a Head of Department exercises his leadership skills depends not so much on the nature of the training he has received as his perception of the relevance of his training and his determination to implement the values therein.

In Further Professional Training the learner will be helped to internalise his learning if he can be determinative in selecting modes and criteria of assessment, examinations and evaluation (where relevant). To involve the learner in target setting and situation analysis is a way of helping him to ownership of the results and consequences of assessment. There would seem to be little point in assessing (or whatever) a student on his competence in certain dimensions of leadership behaviour if he does not accept these dimensions as relevant or the measures of effectiveness to be valid.

There is always the problem of standards - of acknowledgement, and attainment.[n] Ultimately standards are subjective because there will always be differing views of relevance. (For example, is correct spelling more important than the coherence of syntax). But standards are of a different order in examinations from evaluation and different again in assessment. Examinations are more objective in that they are concerned with the attainment of other people; evaluation is most subjective in that it is an expression of values while assessment requires a balancing of examination against evaluation. In programmes of professional training criteria in examination assessment and evaluation accumulate during the programme and in reference to the user's environment. A programme in leadership, for example, cannot exist outside the general requirements of the domain where leadership will be exercised, or outside the performance of leaders trained on a sequence of courses on the leadership training programme.

Bearing in mind that learners are integrally bound up in the assessment dimension of the learning/training programme, they are not the originators of the programme in most circumstances (especially those initiated within institutions). Hence the starting point for assessment, evaluation, etc. is situated with the programme originators. It is incumbent on them to offer as clearly as possible their position with regard to content, mode and assessment but to offer this as their part of an open and negotiable contract. That is, they are open to changing what they offer should circumstances indicate that this should be so. In which case the issue lies around criteria and parameters for negotiation rather than criteria for assessment. If a course is offered in the area of leadership training, the tutors will offer a contract in terms of what they consider to be the content and criteria of examination and assessment and indicate the ground rules for the negotiation process. The learners have no option but to accept this starting point but thereafter negotiation occurs in terms of the professional context in which the learning is centred.

(n) We may understand achievement in terms of the extent or coverage of learning and attainment in terms of level or intensity. A distinction not always made.

We may begin to state here a possible view of the tutor contract on a leadership programme. Essentially this is an experiential programme because learning is considered to be dependent on holistic (or integrated) learning - that is both cognitive and affective. Assessment(also examination and evaluation) will be mainly concerned with the performance so that largely intellectual learning will have to be verified in behaviour.

The programme may state the characteristics of leadership and offer ways of development in each dimension. (There are problems of testing pre and post behaviour in this context because of the role of tester and his relationship with the learners). But it is essential to have the agreement of the learner about the mode of assessment. Most desirably he should be able to agree on the instrument of assessment. Of course, in further professional training there is less emphasis on "all or nothing" testing; the problem with much testing is that it occurs once on a pass/fail basis with no second chance, or at best a second chance at a remote date. The premise in this paper is that learning and assessment are an integrated process and hence there is (theoretically) no limit to the amount of assessment permissable. If the learner knows that assessment is a guide to learning and not a moral judgement (evaluation then assessment will be acceptable as having only the function of diagnosis and analysis. This being the case, assessment can be openly and freely negotiated with the learner's full co-operation with him having no anxiety about 'failure'. Indeed failure is not an issue, only that he improve in his learning

There is a question as to whether theoretical (cognitive/learning) and practical (affective) learning can be separated for assessment purposes. The answer must be that for assessment purposes, though not in practice, they can. Assessment is an investigation of an aspect or behaviour by concentrating up to the partial or complete exclusion of others. The important factor is the reasonable integration of the separate assessment so that the overall result is not biased.

Assessment, though it may take conventional forms may be undertaken in a variety of ways. For example, peer assessment may be the presentation of formal essays judged (n) (assessed) by colleagues in the learning group. Assessment by objectives may be done by the learner setting his own objectives or gaols and measuring their attainment. In terms of existential theory, there is no need for an individual to seek corroboration but institutionalised assessment by definition and circumstances cannot be (entirely) personal and existential; there is always an element of peer and/or authority judgement (n) in assessment.

It is unlikely in the case of Further Professional Training that learners will wish to hand over all the assessment to their tutors; indeed such a view would be contrary to the notion of professional responsibility. As indicated earlier, Further Professional Training requires the maximum participation by the learner though there may be reasons why risky and sensitive approaches to assessment will be considered. There is also a danger that behavioural assessment can become so complicated as to be counter-productive. The reality is that many assessments can be validly made on the basis of comparatively meagre evidence and considerable subjectivity. The formal process of assessment is often more for the benefit of public justice and to deal with intractably deviant situations. In the end, the formal apparatus of assessment should not dominate unduly the integral assessment of the dynamic learning process itself.

(n) in the sense of an expression of considered and informed opinion.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

A leader has to be able (in a leadership situation) to:

analyse and evaluate his behaviour and reaction

receive and give feedback, personal and situational

accept aggression

be able to change his role and behaviour according to the needs of the situation

seek and receive counsel both inside and out of the situation

have a clear philosophy and understanding of the value context (environment) of the situation

be able to take and respond to appropriate initiatives

have a range of helping and facilitating skills

be able to conceptualise what is happening and share his insights with others

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL BASE FOR LEADERSHIP

Understanding of self and behaviour under organisational pressure

Understanding of group behaviour and variety of leadership functions

Knowledge of concepts in leadership and group theory

Ability to use self understanding in leadership situations

Ability to behave as a functional member of a group

Ability to explain what happens to individuals in leadership situations and explain and interpret group processes

SCHEDULE OF CRITERIA OF ASSESSMENT

May be rated by several judges including himself. An aggregate could be agreed and a 'pass'given for a score over, say,4.

1. To what extent does he understand the theory?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How well does he arrange his material? How systematic is he?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How perceptive is the analysis?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. What is the degree of coherence in argument or performance?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. How appropriate is the analysis or behaviour to the situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. To what extent does he appear to be in control of the material situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. What degree of empathy does he show to the subject matter/client?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. What degree of sensitivity does he show to the situation or material?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. What degree of insight does he show(into the problems)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. What degree of originality (i.e. creative difference) does he show compared to others in the group/in general experience.

1 3 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Full possible score is 100%.

Aggregate totals divided by the number of scorer are also percentages.

MODES OF PRESENTATION

There is a range of modes of presentation of material/or assessment given to the learner so that the learner is a party to selection and has a say in their use and significance. They include:

essays - on unseen and negotiated topics

projects - on agreed topics and by agreed methods

case studies

standard tests

evaluative tests

examinations of various kinds

simulations

real 'test' situations e.g. practical experience on attachment

oral presentations e.g. viva role examination